

Jenna Sutela, Daniel Cockburn, Frank Heath

Nice night for a walk

Curated by Erik Martinson

19 - 23 July 2017

Wednesday - Sunday, 12 - 6pm

This July The RYDER is pleased to present three video programmes, each running a week in the gallery.

Nine artists will present their works in:

- Resting Transmissions (5 – 9 July)
- Eyes Above, Bodies Below (12 – 16 July)
- Nice night for a walk (19 – 23 July)

Nice night for a walk

When Bill Paxton died on February 25, 2017, a cartoon circulated online celebrating a genre film claim that only he and one other actor could make. Paxton had roles in three prevalent sci-fi/horror franchises, in each case being 'offed' by the trademarked creature: The Terminator (1984), Aliens (1986), and Predator 2 (1990). The cartoon depicts forlorn versions of the eponymous characters: a Xenomorph (Alien) pouring out a brown paper bag clad bottle at a grave while Arnold Schwarzenegger's leather jacketed Terminator stands back to one side, bottle in one hand with the other on heart, the Predator appearing as his gestural bookend. An actor with an expansive career beyond these films, Paxton's inadvertent achievement in the eyes of genre fans performs as trivia. Some say it stretches facts. Paxton's blue-haired punk in The Terminator isn't visibly dispatched by the mission-driven cyborg. In the scene the recently time-travelled Schwarzenegger-bot approaches the punks, fully yet discretely naked. Paxton's character jokes: 'Nice night for a walk.' The lumbering mass of bio-machine repeats: 'Nice night for a walk.' Fully dispatched or not, it doesn't end well for Paxton's punk.

Aside from the strange meta-mourning for an actor by narratively separated fictional assailants, this cartoon becomes a node of convergence for both fan-fiction and the figure of an actor as holder of fictional traces. Franchised and spreading, these films become reiterated, repurposed in online forums and other media: many nights, many walks. Further to this, actors and their performed characters may become living agents of the fictional beyond the frame. Extrapolated, vertical pathways that variously intersect begin to coexist alongside narratively propelled linearity.

The works in Nice night for a walk sprout from moments of layered media sediment. Their metallic mirrored surfaces reflect back their ossified references, while surrounding and reworking them. Forming pathways to seek its food source, slime mold propels itself through a maze like structure of spiritual significance in RI JIRI I O WA NU RU DAINICHI T-1000 (Jenna Sutela). The vibrant green tendrils, working as a decentralized system, secure efficient routes. Like a highlighter pen, their growth traces a map for the survival of the whole, which is paralleled in clips from Terminator 2 where globs of T-1000 seek to reform to complete its mission: liquidity continually morphs around danger, becoming dangerous, unstoppable. Footage from another Schwarzenegger vehicle, The 6th Day, is loosened and reworked in WEAKEND (Daniel Cockburn). Following the inference of the source film's title, a calendar structure is imposed: the creationist metaphor applied to the sci-fi narrative of cloning is broadened to consider the relationship of an artist to materials. In this case, video clips and editing are divinely employed until the acting agent within the frame makes a Promethean gesture towards self-actualization. A payphone becomes the locus for an unraveling tale in The Hollow Coin (Frank Heath). The boundaries of a system fading from operation and memory are tested as the protagonist speaks to the complaints department about a 'coin' lost in the phone used by the caller. Intrigue mounts as the false coin is revealed to contain footage on a SD card: a phone booth in a field that erupts in flames. The protagonist needs the fake coin back, after using it to pay for their present call; a paradoxical time loop reminiscent of Terminator 2 is introduced. Sparking embers of molten metal transplant and dissolve the archaic phone box in the nickel's footage, just as they claim the heroic cyborg of the referenced film: lowering with a thumb up to a future dystopia unwritten.

Programme

- RI JIRI I O WA NU RU DAINICHI T-1000

Jenna Sutela, 2016, 2:15

- WEAKEND

Daniel Cockburn, 2003, 7:15

- RI JIRI I O WA NU RU DAINICHI T-1000

Jenna Sutela, 2016, 2:15 (repeated)

- The Hollow Coin

Frank Heath, 2016, 12:13

Programme Notes

RI JIRI I O WA NU RU DAINICHI T-1000, Jenna Sutela, 2016

A video loop based on footage of Orbs, a series of sculptural artworks in which spherical mazes juxtapose Physarum polycephalum, or the "many-headed" slime mold, with organizational and spiritual charts.

The video focuses on the Minakata Mandala, a shape drawn by a Japanese naturalist named Minakata Kumagusu, who collected slime mold samples for Emperor Hirohito in the 1920s. In a letter to a Buddhist monk, Kumagusu represented his view of the world through the mandala drawing: "With humans placed at the center of the diagram, our ability to comprehend causal connections between things diminishes as they are located further outward from the center and our awareness of them becomes more tenuous." The mandala is also a manifestation of the limits of anthropocentrism and the existence of systems beyond cause-and-effect chains of connection.

Here, Kumagusu's mandala is chromed and spatialized in reference to T-1000, a robot from Terminator 2 that likens to the slime mold: a self-reconfiguring, many-headed system, liquid inside and shape-shifting gel-like structures outside. A chant, or a sounding mantra accompanies the amalgamation of these two cultural references, or forms of organization, and the slime mold's body as it slowly extends itself around them. (JS)

*Concurrently on view in Nam-Gut, Jenna Sutela's exhibition at Banner Repeater, through July 30th.

*Publication available: Orgs: From Slime Mold to Silicon Valley and Beyond, Jenna Sutela, 2017, Garret Publications.

Jenna Sutela's installations, text and sound performances seek to identify and react to precarious social and material moments, often in relation to technology. Most recently, she has been exploring exceedingly complex biological and computational systems, ultimately unknowable and in a constant state of becoming. Sutela has exhibited her work at Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin, The Institute of Contemporary Arts London, and The Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, among others.

Camera and editing for RI JIRI I O WA NU RU DAINICHI T-1000: Mikko Gaestel.

WEAKEND, Daniel Cockburn, 2003

A videotape whose sole audio/video source is The 6th Day, a Hollywood feature film about cloning. WEAKEND subjects Arnold Schwarzenegger to a cruel series of digital replications until the Sabbath arrives, the videomaker rests, and Arnold gets to speak for himself: a desperate critique of self-indulgent video art. (DC)

Daniel Cockburn is a Canadian filmmaker and video artist. His feature You Are Here won top prize at the European Media Art Festival and has been compared to the work of Charlie Kaufman, Jorge Luis Borges, and Philip K. Dick. His performance All The Mistakes I've Made was developed during a DAAD-Berlin residency. It toured internationally, and was followed up years later by a sequel called All The Mistakes I've Made, part 2. He lives in London, where he is a 2017 Associate Artist in Residence at Acme Studios, anWd a 2017 Fellow in Film Practice at Queen Mary University of London.

The Hollow Coin, Frank Heath, 2016

The Hollow Coin explores roles of authority in public space and the intersection of personal and historical narratives. The video combines documentary footage of New York City's rapidly disappearing network of payphones with audio of a covertly recorded telephone exchange between an actor and an unknowing bystander. In the surreptitiously captured conversation an attempted "information leak" is infused with an absurd story and a historical anecdote. The work's title refers to a Soviet spy who was apprehended in 1953 after mistakenly paying his newspaper delivery boy with a hollow coin that contained a microfilm of an encrypted message. Throughout the video a parallel sequence of events reveals that images from the video itself have been stored on an SD card concealed within a hollow coin and inserted into the payphone from which the call was made. (FH)

Frank Heath (b. 1982, St. Joseph, MO) lives and works in New York. Recent exhibitions include Blue Room, Swiss Institute (2017); Backup, Simone Subal (2014); A Tale of Two Islands, The High Line, New York (2014); and Matter out of Place, The Kitchen, New York (2012). The Hollow Coin, has been shown at International Film Festival Rotterdam (2017), Festival International du Film de La Roche-sur-Yon (2017), Sarasota Film Festival (2017), International Film Festival Message to Man and Experimental Film Festival Kinodot (2017). The film was awarded Best Documentary Short at Indielisboa (2017) and the Deframed Audience Award at Kurzfilm Hamburg (2017).

With thanks to Simone Subal Gallery